



HISTORIC AND CURRENT INEQUITIES

City of Minneapolis

Photo courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society

Introduction

Achieving equity in transportation means that the quality of the transportation networks in the city creates fair and just opportunities and outcomes for all people. In Minneapolis, historic exclusion from government-led processes, disinvestment in certain communities, and insensitive design have all contributed to the inequities that persist today. To rectify these systemic injustices, both past and present, we must reconsider and invest in our transportation system through a deep commitment to racial equity – providing just outcomes for all people in the city, and outcomes that are not predictable by race.

The Twin Cities Metro area has transformed into one of the best urban areas in the nation when it comes to employment, homeownership, low poverty rates, and per capita income. However, not all have benefited from this growth.¹¹ In terms of disparities between white residents and residents of color, the Twin Cities metro area is the third-worst in the nation for employment rate, worst for homeownership and low poverty rates, and fifth worst when it comes to per capita income.¹² These devastating metrics, while not specific to transportation, are influenced by the transportation system and have profound implications for how, when, how safely, and where people travel in Minneapolis. To learn more about how these disparities came to be, explore the [Transportation Equity Dashboard](#).

¹¹ Washington Post [Minneapolis had progressive policies, but its economy still left black families behind](#) Tracy Jan, June 30, 2020.

¹² Minneapolis 2040, Goal 1, [Eliminate disparities](#).



Acknowledgment of past harms

The City of Minneapolis acknowledges that the transportation system and government-supported decisions have underserved, excluded, harmed and overburdened some communities, namely Black and Indigenous communities, other communities of color, and people with disabilities. We understand that these past decisions have denied these communities the full participation of transportation benefits, which has led to disproportionate burdens.¹³

A brief history of the land and people of Minneapolis

Minneapolis, like every city in the United States, is impacted by the genocide of Indigenous Peoples,¹⁴ slavery, and colonization. The city of Minneapolis rests on the traditional homeland of the Dakota People, who stewarded it for millennia before unfairly ceding it to the United States in the Treaties of 1837 & 1851.¹⁵ Only six years after the Dakota Land Cession Treaties,¹⁶ the Supreme Court's 1857 decision in *Scott v. Sanford*¹⁷ took place on Minnesota soil. It formally stripped African Americans of the right to any protection from the federal government or courts – deeming it unconstitutional to bar or limit slavery from a Federal territory.¹⁸

Minneapolis has a long history of immigration.¹⁹ Social services, family-based petitioning, and strong cultural identities have ensured that the city has remained a destination for many immigrants to this day, but not all immigrants have received the same welcome or been able to share in the same benefits afforded to many other residents. The effects of racism, colonialism, ableism, and other forms of discrimination and trauma continue to be felt by residents of Minneapolis to this day, especially by Black, Indigenous, and other residents of color.

¹³ This acknowledgment is adapted from the MnDOT acknowledgment developed for the 2022 draft [Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan](#) (Appendix H, pg. 3).
¹⁴ University of Minnesota Holocaust and Genocide Studies [US-Dakota War of 1862](#).
¹⁵ Why Treaties Matter: an exhibit of the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council, [Relations: Dakota & Ojibwe Treaties](#).
¹⁶ Why Treaties Matter: an exhibit of the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council, [1851 Dakota Land Cession Treaties](#).
¹⁷ Dred Scott vs. Sanford, 1857, [National Archives](#).
¹⁸ Dred Scott vs. Sanford was overturned by the 13th and 14th Amendments to the United States Constitution, [National Archives](#).
¹⁹ Since the 19th century, Minneapolis has seen countless waves of immigrants, but not all of these have been welcome. Until the 1970's, most immigrants coming to Minneapolis hailed from Germany, Norway and Sweden but also included Chinese immigrants and Jewish immigrants from Russia. Today, our largest immigrant groups are from Mexico, India, Laos, Somalia, and Vietnam. Today in the Twin-Cities metro area, one in four children has at least [one immigrant parent](#).

Photo courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society



The sections below explore discriminatory policies and practices starting at the turn of the twentieth century. We acknowledge that we have left out significant and traumatic chapters in Minneapolis' history. What is written here is not meant to be an exhaustive or comprehensive overview of the land and settlement of people of Minneapolis; there are significant gaps in our ability to acknowledge and articulate historic harms and current inequities in this document. This brief framing merely provides a way to give context to the ramifications of the past and its role in shaping the backdrop of our transportation systems today.

Historic inequities in Minneapolis

Housing and lending policies and practices

The history of segregation and redlining practices in Minneapolis can be traced from the early 1900's. Economic prosperity in the 1920's resulted in a housing boom in Minneapolis, increasing the city's footprint as its boundaries spread further south. New neighborhoods sprung to life in response, many of which specifically included restrictions to keep out anyone who was not white. Racist language was written into deeds of homes in certain areas, worded as crudely and blatantly as, "Premises shall not be sold, mortgaged, or leased to or occupied by any person or persons other than the members of the Caucasian race."²⁰

These first racial restrictions on deeds were called racial covenants, and they were a legal and systematic method used to exclude people of color from living in certain parts of a city. The first racial covenants²¹ in Minneapolis were written in 1910 in the Longfellow and Lynnhurst neighborhoods. While no longer legally enforceable, many of these are still in place in the deeds to Minneapolis homes today. This process was endorsed by the federal government; starting in the 1930s the Federal Housing Administration required racial covenants be included in any project receiving federally backed financing. Not until 1948 were such covenants declared unenforceable by the U.S. Supreme Court, and covenants enforced by social pressure were commonplace until 1968 when the Fair Housing Act banned the practice.²²

²⁰ MinnPost, [With covenants, racism was written into Minneapolis housing. The scars are still visible](#). Greta Kaul, Feb 22, 2019.

²¹ University of Minnesota [Mapping Prejudice Project](#)

²² Minneapolis' [Just Deeds Project](#) offers free services to help property owners remove racial covenants from their properties' legal title.



In the 1930s, the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC) mapped major cities across the country. This process became known as redlining from the color-coding of HOLC maps. HOLC maps aided banks by classifying the risk of lending to certain neighborhoods. The stated purpose was to guide real estate investment, but it was primarily based on the racial and ethnic makeup of residents. Classification favored segregated neighborhoods with only white residents. Areas with high populations of immigrants and people of color were shown in red and rated “hazardous”. Well beyond the end of such practices, the system had left its mark on Minneapolis.²³

Redlining and racial covenants significantly limited mobility and wealth acquisition for people of color starting in the 1930s. Accumulating wealth by buying a home was difficult as a person of color regardless of income level – a reality that is reflected in homeownership rates in Minneapolis today. According to the Census Bureau, about 25% of Black families in Minneapolis are homeowners (one of the lowest homeownership rates in the country) compared to 75% of white families (one of the highest homeownership rates in the country).²⁴ Minneapolis was reported to have the largest homeownership gap in 2018 and the third largest gap in 2020 between Black and white residents.²⁵ The disparity in homeownership rates has led to a wealth gap that has increased over time, as homeownership has allowed (predominately) white families to grow their wealth while that same opportunity was denied to (predominantly) Black families who were forced out of the housing market. Household income, while not the same as wealth, continues to be significantly lower on average in neighborhoods that were redlined in the 1930s.²⁶

“It now seems apparent that public officials and policy makers, especially at the state and local level, used expressway construction to destroy low-income and especially black neighborhoods in an effort to reshape the physical and racial landscapes of the postwar American City.” - Raymond Mohl, from the Poverty and Race Research Council²⁷

In 1956, the creation of the U.S. Interstate Highway System began in earnest with the Federal government offering to pay 90% or more of the cost of construction including land acquisition. Elected officials and highway planners used the money to accomplish “blight

²³ University of Minnesota Law School Institute on Metropolitan Opportunity, [Redlining in the Twin Cities in 1934: 1960's and Today](#)

²⁴ The Washington Post [Racial inequality in Minneapolis is among the worst in the nation](#) Christopher Ingraham, May 30, 2020.

²⁵ The Washington Post, [Racial inequality in Minneapolis is among worst in the nation](#) Christopher Ingraham, May 20, 2020. 2020 gap follows Madison, Wisconsin and Scranton, Pennsylvania.

²⁶ National Community Reinvestment Coalition [HOLC 'Redlining' Maps: The Persistent Structure of Segregation And Economic Inequality](#), Bruce Mitchell, PhD and Juan Franco, March 20, 2018.

²⁷ Poverty and Race Research Action Council [The Interstates and the Cities: Highways, Housing and the Freeway Revolt](#) Raymond Mohl, January 1, 2002.



removal” goals, tearing through communities of color that had seen disinvestment due to redlining and other practices. By 1970, more than one million people had lost their homes to freeway construction in the U.S.²⁸

Minneapolis was no exception. Due to discriminatory housing policies and racist real estate practices, data from the 1960 Census shows that Black residents lived primarily in five neighborhoods across Minneapolis with two of the largest communities in North Minneapolis and in South Minneapolis,²⁹ then known as “old Southside.” In 1956, highway engineers in Minneapolis had selected three possible routes through South Minneapolis for the location of Interstate 35W; the one chosen bisected old Southside.³⁰ The Minnesota Highway Department used the state’s power of eminent domain to condemn and cheaply acquire close to 1,000 properties in order to build I-35W through old Southside.³¹ Much like old Southside, 80% of Saint Paul’s African American population once lived in the Rondo neighborhood. Rondo was also devastatingly bifurcated when the construction of I-94 tore the community in half.³²

The construction of Interstates in the Twin Cities displaced an estimated 25,000 people, from neighborhoods that were home to 80% of the region’s Black population.³³ The interstates were built on and through Black communities and served as barriers between those who remained and white neighborhoods. The highways continue to be a physical barrier for people walking and biking, and even driving, today.

Current disparities in Minneapolis

Transportation safety disparities

A range of current inequities are experienced by residents of color in Minneapolis that build upon the historic disparities experienced in the city. Almost half of the [High Injury Streets](#) in Minneapolis are located within communities with large concentrations of poverty and a high

²⁸ MinnPost, [With covenants, racism was written into Minneapolis housing. The scars are still visible](#). Greta Kaul, Feb 22, 2019.

²⁹ University of Minnesota [Mapping Prejudice Project](#)

³⁰ Minneapolis' [Just Deeds Project](#) offers free services to help property owners remove racial covenants from their properties' legal title.

³¹ University of Minnesota Law School Institute on Metropolitan Opportunity, [Redlining in the Twin Cities in 1934: 1960's and Today](#)

³² The Washington Post [Racial inequality in Minneapolis is among the worst in the nation](#) Christopher Ingraham, May 30, 2020.

³³ The Washington Post, [Racial inequality in Minneapolis is among worst in the nation](#) Christopher Ingraham, May 20, 2020. 2020 gap follows Madison, Wisconsin and Scranton, Pennsylvania.

Photo by Earl Seubert 1972, courtesy of Hennepin County Library's Star Tribune photo collection.



percentage of residents of color. While the areas with the highest TEP score (TEP areas 1 and 2) only contain 20% of city streets, they include 49% of [High Injury Streets](#). In addition, while 28% of Minneapopolitans live in TEP areas 1 and 2, 43% of severe and fatal crashes occurred in these neighborhoods from 2017-2021.³⁵

Disparities also exist when we look at traffic deaths in Minneapolis by race and ethnicity. While Native American residents comprise 1% of the Minneapolis population, they represent 4% of people killed in vehicle crashes and 5% of people killed in pedestrian and bicycle crashes between 2011 and 2019.³⁶ Black residents are also overrepresented in fatal vehicle crashes in Minneapolis. While only 19% of the total population, they represent 26% of people killed in fatal vehicle crashes from 2011-2019.³⁷

Transportation mobility disparities

Not all people have the same access to quality transportation choices. Disparities exist in average commute times³⁸ as well as vehicle access³⁹ for white residents in Minneapolis versus residents of color.

The average commute time for all workers increased between 1990 and 2019 for all Minneapolis residents.⁴⁰ However, while the average 2019 commute time for white residents was 23 minutes, it was 24 minutes for BIPOC residents and 27 minutes for Black residents.⁴¹ That is an additional 40 minutes per week, or about 35 additional hours per year that Black residents are spending trying to get to work.⁴² This disparity is exacerbated when looking at the commute times of residents who are using transit. While the average commute time for white residents who take transit in Minneapolis is 33 minutes, it is 40 minutes for BIPOC residents, and 47 minutes for Black residents.⁴³ On average, BIPOC residents are spending an additional 61 hours per year commuting via transit compared to white residents.⁴⁴ Black residents in Minneapolis are spending an additional 120 hours commuting via public transit every year when compared to white residents on transit. Assuming an eight hour workday and a five day work week, that's 15 additional days of work, or three full weeks of work spent commuting every year compared with white residents.⁴⁵

³⁴ 2020-2022 Vision Zero Action Plan, [Figure 10: High Injury Streets](#).

³⁵ 2020-2022 Vision Zero Action Plan, [Figure 10: High Injury Streets](#).

³⁶ 2020-2022 Vision Zero Action Plan, [Figure 10: High Injury Streets](#).

³⁷ 2020-2022 Vision Zero Action Plan, [Figure 10: High Injury Streets](#).

³⁸ National Equity Atlas, [Commute Times](#), 2019.

³⁹ National Equity Atlas, [Car Access](#), 2019.

⁴⁰ National Equity Atlas, [Commute Times](#), 2019.

⁴¹ National Equity Atlas, [Commute Times](#), 2019.

⁴² The average daily commute for white residents is 46 minutes compared for 54 minutes for Black residents. An 8 minute per day difference results in 40 additional minutes per week. Annual difference was calculated with the formula $((40 \times 52) / 60)$. This assumes a five day workweek and 52 weeks in a calendar year.

⁴³ National Equity Atlas, [Commute Times](#), 2019.

⁴⁴ Figure was calculated using the formula $((14 \times 5) / 60)$. This equals a 14 minute difference per day.

⁴⁵ Figure was calculated using the formula $((28 \times 5) / 60)$. This equals a 28 minute difference per day.



Commute times for Minneapolis residents shifted in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic created a stay-at-home economy that resulted in two tiers of society. Although the pandemic allowed many "non-essential" workers to eliminate their daily commute altogether, many "essential" workers didn't have the same opportunity.⁴⁶ This resulted in amplified hardships where Black and Latinx people were more likely to be unemployed due to the impacts of COVID-19, but were also overrepresented among "essential" workers who were forced to continue commuting to their jobs - often putting them at far greater risk of exposure to the virus.⁴⁷

Vehicle availability is another important metric when considering current transportation inequities in Minneapolis. Income and wealth disparities caused by racially discriminatory practices and policies continue to make an impact today. In Minneapolis, while only 12% of white residents live without access to a vehicle, that number jumps to 29% for BIPOC residents and 36% for Black residents.⁴⁸

Environmental justice

The construction of Interstate 35W was accompanied by a series of environmental consequences, many of which persist today. Formerly redlined areas comprise 17% of Minneapolis' land but include 48% of the total miles of freeway.⁵⁰ The residents who remain near these freeways suffer the effects of concentrated emissions, decades of toxic lead and continuing pollutants including particulate matter. Exposures to nitrogen dioxide levels, as one indicator, are 38 percent greater nationally for neighborhoods of color than in white neighborhoods;⁵¹ Minnesota is the state with the 15th worst exposure gap between people of color and white residents.⁵² Transportation infrastructure also impacts residents' exposure to lung-damaging particulate matter.⁵³ People who live within a quarter mile of a highway (like 35W or I-94) or an arterial road (like Lake Street) are more likely to experience "childhood asthma, impaired lung function, premature death and death from cardiovascular diseases and cardiovascular morbidity."⁵⁴ Air pollution impacts people with asthma or other cardiovascular diseases more than others; as asthma is more common in Black, Native

⁴⁶ Think Global Health, [The Color and Gender of COVID: Essential Workers, Not Disposable People](#) Catherine Powell, June 4, 2020

⁴⁷ Think Global Health, [The Color and Gender of COVID: Essential Workers, Not Disposable People](#) Catherine Powell, June 4, 2020

⁴⁸ National Equity Atlas, [Car Access](#), 2019.

⁴⁹ University of Minnesota Law School Institute on Metropolitan Opportunity, [Redlining in the Twin Cities in 1934: 1960's and Today](#).

⁵¹ University of Minnesota College of Science and Engineering, [Groundbreaking nationwide study finds that people of color live in neighborhoods with more air pollution than whites](#).

⁵² MPR News Study: [Vehicle pollution greater in minority neighborhoods](#) Lorna Benson, April 15, 2014.

⁵³ Center for Disease Control and Prevention, [Residential Proximity to Major Highways](#) 2013.

⁵⁴ American Lung Association [Living Near Highways and Pollution](#).

Photo by Josh Hild, courtesy of Pexels.



American, and Hispanic populations,⁵⁵ these populations are more likely to experience negative effects of air pollution. Many of these individual-focused climate impacts are a result of and/or amplified by historic inequities created by our transportation system.

Past redlining policies are also linked to acute differences in neighborhood temperatures - another persistent climate challenge linked to race.⁵⁶ In Minneapolis, the neighborhoods that are the most impacted by urban heat island effects today are closely associated with areas rated "hazardous" and "declining" on the redlining maps from the 1930s.⁵⁷ Land use and street design decisions have led to more impervious surfaces and less green cover in certain areas of the city; even today, neighborhoods in Minneapolis can face a 10 degree difference⁵⁸ in heat depending on green coverage. This temperature difference is especially important as summer temperatures rise due to climate change. Extreme heat events will become increasingly common, and they present a risk of heat-related illness or even death.⁵⁹ The danger of high temperatures is worse for residents who are unhoused; have diabetes or asthma; work outside; bike, walk, or take transit to get around; and the elderly. Beyond dire health and safety outcomes, high temperatures may prevent people from choosing active commute methods. An equitable transportation system can improve the quality of life and help reverse the disparities experienced by overburdened communities across the city. It is critical that our city has a transportation system that allows all people the opportunity to thrive. A transportation system that works for everyone is one that increases access to places and opportunities, fosters positive health outcomes, and reverses the disparities experienced by communities across the city.

Explore the [Transportation Equity Dashboard](#) to learn more about the history of Minneapolis, why we need transportation equity, and how we are defining equity through data.

⁵⁵ Center for Disease Control and Prevention, [Most Recent National Asthma Data](#) 2020.

⁵⁶ Twin Cities Habitat for Humanity, [Race and Housing Series: Urban Heat Islands](#) 2020.

⁵⁷ Sahan Journal, [It's been a hot, dry summer in the Twin Cities, but not all neighborhoods are hit equally](#) Andrew Hazzard, August 9, 2021.

⁵⁸ National Geographic [Racist housing policies have created some oppressively hot neighborhoods](#) Alejandra Borunda and Riley D Champine, September 2, 2020

⁵⁹ Minneapolis [Climate Action Plan](#) 2013, pages 1 and 5.

Photo by Josh Hild, courtesy of Pexels.